

Chapter 38

Chapter 38 begins with a palpable tension as Jim and Will find themselves in the quiet of the library, a space that is heavy with silence, pierced only by the distant sounds of the carnival unfolding outside. The boys, crouching in the bushes outside the library, feel a wave of trepidation, sensing that something sinister lurks nearby. Will, visibly anxious, expresses his fear of the library, feeling as though their fathers may change into completely different people once they enter this strange and foreboding place. The towering shelves, filled with ancient books, seem to hold secrets that intensify their unease. Will's worry deepens as the space feels less like a sanctuary and more like a trap, something that preys on those who venture too far. Jim, trying to push away the heavy atmosphere surrounding them, impulsively bangs on the library door, eager to seek the warmth and comfort the books might offer, but also feeling the need to confront whatever fears lie ahead.

Once inside the library, the two boys begin to explore the abandoned corridors, their steps echoing in the stillness. They recall past adventures and places where they once found comfort and safety, such as the tall trees they had climbed and the churches where they had sought refuge. The library, however, feels different tonight—its dark corridors and looming shelves seem to possess a life of their own. As they walk deeper into its maze-like structure, their voices drop to whispers, as if speaking any louder would disturb the very essence of the space. The night's events have built up a sense of dread, making their exploration feel more like a cautious pilgrimage through a sacred, yet dangerous, domain. The shadows that stretch across the walls seem to take on a life of their own, moving in the corners of their vision, adding to the tension that hangs in the air. The boys, once confident in their curiosity, now feel the weight of their fear, unsure of what lies ahead in the dark recesses of the library.

They eventually stumble upon a small room where Will's father, Charles Halloway, has been preparing various books. The atmosphere in the room feels heavier, as the boys recount recent encounters that have left them unnerved, including a strange lightning-rod salesman and the foreboding storm clouds on the horizon. Their minds are still occupied by the strange carnival that had recently rolled into town, its sinister presence dominating their thoughts. As they speak of the carnival's unsettling arrival, Charles listens intently, his expression thoughtful. He is clearly troubled by the series of unusual events, and as he reflects on his own past, the pieces of a darker puzzle begin to fall into place. He recognizes that this is not a simple series of coincidences, but part of a disturbing, cyclical pattern that seems to tie itself to the month of October. The more Charles contemplates the situation, the clearer it becomes that something far more ominous is afoot, and the boys must be prepared to face it.

Charles begins to speak of "the autumn people," a term that carries a weight of historical fear and foreboding. These beings, he recalls, are said to emerge with the fall season, bringing with them an aura of darkness that consumes everything in its path. The autumn people's cyclical return, feeding on the fears and souls of those they encounter, has been woven into the fabric of time. The connection between these mysterious figures and the carnival becomes more apparent to Charles as he speaks of them, and the boys begin to understand the deeper connection between the carnival's arrival and the cycle of fear that has plagued the town for generations. The knowledge of this dark force leaves them questioning their own roles in this unfolding mystery. Are they merely "summer people," blissfully unaware of the creeping danger that autumn brings, or do they share a deeper connection to the coming darkness? The return of the carnival, with its sinister undertones, forces the boys to confront their own fears, as they realize the darkness of the past is reawakening.

As Charles continues to discuss the nature of the autumn people and the historical patterns they follow, the boys begin to understand the depth of the threat they face. The cycle of darkness that has resurfaced with the carnival's return is not just about external threats but also about confronting the darkness within themselves and the world around them. The carnival's sinister influence is not just in its performances but

in the way it taps into the deepest fears of those it touches. Charles, with his experience and understanding, pledges to help the boys unravel the mysteries that lie ahead. He knows that the battle they are about to face is not just one of physical confrontation but one of understanding and preparation, where the strength of their connection, trust, and shared experiences will be their greatest asset. The conversation ends with a deeper resolve among them all, knowing that they must face the carnival and its dark influence together, understanding that knowledge and unity are the key to overcoming the impending danger.



Summaryer